

October 5, 2021

Special Report: Fatal Overdose Comparison by 6 Month Interval

For calendar year 2020, the number of accidental overdose deaths (203) represented a significant increase from the previous year (128). Data from 2020 indicated that the rise was almost entirely related to the potent opioid drug fentanyl. The data contained in this report indicates that fentanyl overdose deaths rose dramatically during the second half of 2020 and have continued at a similar rate during the first six months of 2021. If overdoses continue at this rate, the number of accidental overdoses in the county could exceed 250 by year end.

This report compares drug overdose deaths from 2019 through 2021 in six-month intervals. The second graph compares select drug categories. Multiple drugs or medications may be involved in one case when there is a combined drug overdose; therefore, one should not add the numbers of individual substances. The same case may be represented multiple times by different drugs or drug categories (e.g. fentanyl and heroin are both opioids).

Noteworthy trends:

- 1) The number of fentanyl deaths increased significantly during the last 6 months of 2020 and continued at a similar rate through the 1st half of 2021.
 - 2) Benzodiazepine deaths were elevated for the second half of 2020 and methamphetamine deaths were elevated for the first 6 months in 2021. These spikes were, in part, due to fentanyl. Fentanyl appears to have driven up counts for other drug categories when fentanyl is present in combined drug overdoses:
 - a. For 2nd half of 2020, 17 of the 34 benzodiazepine deaths also had fentanyl contributing.
 - b. For 1st half of 2021, 28 of the 61 methamphetamine deaths also had fentanyl contributing.
- For more information about the Medical Examiner's Office, visit <https://meo.ventura.org/>
 - For overdose prevention resources and information on Ventura County's response to the opioid crisis, visit <https://www.venturacountyresponds.org/>

